



March 24, 1997

The Honorable Ernest Istook
119 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Istook:

I commend your efforts in sponsoring the Religious Freedom Amendment. The Family Research Council fully supports your bill.

It is alarming to watch judges add brick upon brick to the so-called "wall of separation" between church and state. The Supreme Court and our federal courts have gutted the Free Exercise Clause of the Constitution, and enshrined the Establishment Clause as the cornerstone of the First Amendment, relegating our most important freedoms to a distant second place. People of faith are regarded as "second-class citizens" and routinely discriminated against by the government when it comes to programs or benefits. The drafters of the First Amendment certainly did not intend to require discrimination against religion or to bar all religious speech and exercise from the public square. Nothing short of a constitutional amendment can set our religious freedom jurisprudence back on track.

The Religious Freedom Amendment will restore and protect our children's ability to voluntarily pray in school and at school graduations, and will allow communities to display the Ten Commandments, crèches, menorahs, and other symbols of religious holidays as part of our rich heritage and tradition. It will also require that government treat people of faith fairly and equally, giving successful initiatives such as faith-based drug rehabilitation programs an equal opportunity to assist those in need.

Congressman Istook, we are grateful to you for your tireless efforts in fighting for this amendment and for our religious freedom, and for taking a stand against the continuing secularization of society.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Bauer
President

Family Research Council

801 G Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001 • (202) 393-2100 • FAX (202) 393-2134 • Internet www.frc.org